



METROPOLITAN
COUNCIL ON HOUSING

215 West 23rd Street, New York 11, N.Y.
SP. 7-8900

TENANT NEWS

250 DELEGATES AT MET COUNCIL CONFERENCE HEAR CORE LEADER HIT DISCRIMINATION AND SLUM LANDLORDS; PLAN ACTION TO WIN DEMANDS

"Slumlords are the only merchants in the U.S. who can sell second-hand merchandise not in first-class condition. Even a used-car dealer shines up the car." These were the pointed words of Oliver Leeds, ex-chairman of Brooklyn CORE, and keynote speaker at the 5th Conference of Met Council on Nov. 16th. His hard-hitting speech to the 250 registered delegates and observers set the tone for the panel sessions and the final plenary session in the afternoon.

The Conference was billed as an "action" conference and it ended with specific proposals for strong action to win specific goals:

- From the CODE ENFORCEMENT panel, 1. The President, the Governor and the Mayor were asked to declare as disaster areas those areas most seriously suffering from lack of code enforcement, such as Harlem, East Harlem, Southeast Bronx, Lower East Side and Bedford-Stuyvesant; 2. Mass demonstrations at the rent control hearings before the City Council in January; 3. A continuations committee to work on direct action such as Citywide rent strikes, picketlines, etc.

- From the URBAN RENEWAL panel, 1. Organization and support for those tenants who refuse to move from their homes and face eviction for urban renewal, conservation, luxury housing or rehabilitation; 2. Picketlines at the Housing and Redevelopment Board; 3. A March on Washington for rebuilding a democratic America.

- From the PUBLIC HOUSING panel, 1. A demand that New York City build 500,000 new units in 10 years or 50,000 units per year; 2. Picket lines at State and Federal public housing offices; 3. Face-to-face meetings between Gov. Rockefeller and tenants who are waiting for public housing; 4. A meeting with Federal housing boss Robert Weaver.

- From the Spanish panel, ACCION PARA VIVIENDAS DECENTES, a decision to form a new group, consisting of Spanish-speaking tenants, under the auspices of Met Council, to deal with the specific problems of this minority group, including discrimination.

Copies of the resolutions will be sent to all registrants and to anyone who sends in a request.

Who was there?

A quick look at the registrations shows delegates from Met Council affiliates, including the newest member, Ebbets Field Tenants Action Committee..from CORE, NAACP, Urban League & other civil rights groups...Mobilization for Youth...churches...political clubs, both regular & reform Democrats, and Republicans...community organizations....many public housing tenant associations...labor unions, including Dist. 65, RWDSU, Drug & Hospital #1199, Cooks Union #89, Fur Joint Board, as well as observers from other unions.... Puerto Rican organizations....government bodies...and, finally, New Jersey and suburban housing groups

MET COUNCIL DIARY

Oct. 22: Esther Rand, Met Council Exec. Bd. member, spoke at the Improvement Assn. of the East 20's.

Oct. 24: Mamie Jackson, Board member and exec. dir. of the Bronx Council on Rents and Housing, addressed the Furriers Joint Council.

Nov. 12: Jane Benedict, chairman of Met Council, was guest lecturer at a class on "Citizen Participation in the Modern City," at the New School for Social Research. The class is taught by Walter Thabit, city planner and consultant on the Alternate Plan for Cooper Sq.

Nov. 21: Jane Benedict journeyed out to Garden City, L.I., to speak for Met Council at the legislative program hearing of the NY State Democratic Committee. She urged strengthening of laws against discrimination in housing and legislative action to revive and increase the public housing program.

TENANTS TALK TURKEY

Tenants of the infamous "horror house" of Chelsea (see Sept. & Oct. TENANT NEWS) talked "turkey" at City Hall on Nov. 12. Disgusted at delay after delay in putting their building into receivership, they picketed City Hall with a stuffed turkey. They have been unable to live in their apartments since Sept. 10 because the building is unsafe. The tenants warned Julius Edelstein, asst. to the Mayor, and Judah Gribetz, Deputy Commr. of Buildings, with whom they met: We intend to eat Thanksgiving Dinner in our homes -- whether or not repairs are finished by then.

The tenants and members of the Chelsea Save Our Homes Comm. carried signs reading, "The landlord gets the turkey, We get the leavings." The Mayor was asked to speak out on court delays in putting neglected buildings under receivership. In the words of the tenants--"We have had enough gobble-gobble on receivership! We want action!"

LEGISLATIVELY SPEAKING

by Frances Gordin

For several years, ever since Robert Moses went to Washington and got special permission for NY City to "urban renew" by selling tenants and buildings along with the land to private sponsors, Met Council has been fighting to end this dangerous practice. Mayor Wagner has just announced that this procedure will be changed, and the City will relocate the tenants and clear the land before the land is turned over to sponsors. It may bring lower rents (\$2.50 per room) for middle-income apartments in urban renewal.

Altho this is undoubtedly a timid step in the right direction, it is too little and too late and does nothing to solve the current housing crisis. Unless the Mayor and our legislative bodies take some giant steps along three main avenues of relief, an aroused citizenry will find a way to express its discontent and place the blame for the housing crisis where it belongs.

Three basic steps must be taken if there is to be any real progress:

1. We have urged before and repeat now: Mayor Wagner should lead a mass delegation of tenants to Washington and Albany to revive the dead public housing program and demand immediate funds for massive new public housing construction.
2. New housing must be built on vacant land or badly-used land. Thus every apartment built will be a net addition to the supply.
3. Finally, the City must realize that new building must be done in stages, so that those now living in bad housing can move into good new reasonably-priced housing in their own community. Until slum dwellers are the benefactors and not the victims of urban renewal, it will be rejected by the tenants.

"REHABILITATION -- What Does It Mean to Tenants?" issued by Met Council in November. The basic question to be answered is: "Who pays for rehabilitation?" The answer, in the City's plan which is analysed in this report, is you -- the tenants! And the cost would be high. Rent increases would be at least \$15 to \$40 per month, also according to the City's plan.

The Met Council report contains suggestions for rehabilitation without rent increases. Copies are available from Met Council, 215 W. 23 St., NY 11 or call SP 7-8900.

"Report of Ad Hoc Committee on the West Side Urban Renewal Plan," issued by the F.D.R.-Woodrow Wilson Democrats, 107 W. 96th St. A detailed, serious study of what has gone wrong with the WestSide urban renewal plan; failure to provide low-priced housing in time, relocation snarls, tax exemption for luxury rehabilitation. Many of these faults had been pointed out by Met Council in its opposition to the plan. It is encouraging that a group on the Upper WestSide is finally taking a critical and thorough look at the plan. We urge that others study this report and take action accordingly. It is available from the AdHocCommittee.

"Family and Social Change in an African City; A Study of Rehousing in Lagos, Nigeria," Peter Marris, Northwestern Univ. Press, 1962. Urban renewal and how and why it went wrong on another continent.

The Met Council Executive Board is temporarily without one of its most valuable members, Mrs. Petra Rosa. We hope that her illness (the all-too-common bad back) will not keep her from us too long.

The ExecutiveBoard is glad to welcome three new members who filled vacancies: Stan Aronowitz, Jose Fuentes and Bryna Zwicker.

TENANT NEWS wishes to thank Morris Steinhaus for his generous gift of \$50 in memory of Robert Wood. He was a former associate of Bob's. We hope that other friends of Bob will continue to support TENANT NEWS in which he was so interested.

LANDLORDS RALLY TO KILL CONTROLS or The Inside Story of the "Liberation Rally" of the Metropolitan Fair Rent Committee

(Exclusive to TENANT NEWS from Meryl Lewis and Irene Eckstein, our on-the-spot observer.)

Sunday, Oct. 6th was the day for all loyal real estate and landlord people who believe in "restoring property rights" and killing rent control. They crowded into Manhattan Center that day and their aim was to soften the hearts (and empty the pockets) of NewYork tenants. Their slogan was "Rent Control Must Go NOW!"

Altho the chairman of the meeting was none other than Mr. Rex Tompkins, president of the East River Management Corp., the real hero of the day was Vito Batiata, self-appointed spokesman for the small landlord. The hall rang with enthusiastic support when he exhorted the landlords to stop making repairs until Rent Control is ended.

The meeting initiated a campaign to kill Rent Control when the law comes up for renewal in March, 1964. The campaign will not lack for money, according to the leadership of real estate. Attacking the Wagner administration for supporting Rent Control for "merely political reasons" the rally also distributed petitions against control.

New York City tenants, studying the results of the "Liberation Rally," must acknowledge a debt to the landlords.....for we have now been forewarned. We must step up the campaign for stronger rent controlwith no weakening changes.

REPORTS FROM REHABILITATION AREAS

Here are the latest developments in two areas proposed for rehabilitation by the City Planning Commission. For more general information on the City's rehabilitation plan, send for MetCouncil's "REHABILITATION -- What Does It Mean to Tenants?," no charge, (see page 3).

St. Nicholas Park

A kick-off meeting, to alert tenants of the St. Nicholas Park Rehabilitation Area of future rent increases, took place at 136 Street & 8th Avenue on October 21. Three organizations sponsored the meeting: Uptown Tenant Council, Manhattan CORE and the Metropolitan Council on Housing. Petitions were circulated, directed to Mayor Wagner, stating that tenants did not want to foot the bill for past landlord neglect and asking for repairs without rent increases. One tenant brought in over 100 signed petitions and 500 were collected by the end of the meeting.

The rally was addressed by Marshall England, chairman of NY CORE, William Stanley, Uptown Tenant Council, Eugenia Flatow, District Leader, 7th A.D., Granville Cherry, Harlem Education Project, Stanley Aronowitz, national rep. ACWU, and Frances Goldin, Met Council.

NY CORE has decided to make the organization of tenants in the St. Nicholas Pk. area a major project. Met Council and its affiliate, the Uptown Tenant Council will continue to work with CORE so that tenants in the area can form into a group to get improved housing with-out rent increases.

Frances Goldin

Children's Museum

Tenant and homeowner leaders in the proposed Children's Museum rehabilitation area met last month to resolve their differences and work out a common approach to rehabilitation. Meeting under the auspices of the Parkway-Stuyvesant Community & Housing Council, the group also included representatives from the Urban League, City Commission on Human Rights, and Unity Democratic Club. The result was a program calling for no rent increases, tax abatement for homeowners and subsidies from the Federal government to the City to finance the program. The committee intends to meet with the City Planning Commission soon.

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...DON'T DELAY.....

...JOIN MET COUNCIL TODAY!.....

THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ON HOUSING welcomes the support of every organization and individual interested in "decent housing at rentals people can afford." Yearly membership is \$10 for organizations; \$5 for individuals. You may join by signing this address label ---- and sending it with membership fee to Met Council on Housing, 215 West 23 St.

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